AVATAR

The Last Airbender

Show #117

BOOK ONE: WATER
CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: "The Gliders"

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ACT ONE

EXT. CAMPSITE - LATE NIGHT

CLOSE ON

Aang, Momo, Katara and Sokka, huddled around a campfire with some other TRAVELERS, listen intently as a STORYTELLER finishes the last few words of a story.

STORYTELLER
...So, travelers, the next time you think you hear a strange, large bird talking, take a closer look. It might not be a giant parrot, but a flying man! A member of a secret group of airwalkers who laugh at gravity-
(rousing, pointing at the crowd)
And laugh at those bound to the earth by it!

AANG
(to Katara and Sokka)
Aren't Airbender stories the best?

KATARA
Was it realistic? Is that how it was back then?

AANG
I laugh at gravity all the time.
(chuckles)
Gravity...

The Storyteller walks by them holding out his CAP into which travelers drop coins. He offers it to Sokka.

STORYTELLER
Jingle, jingle.

Sokka digs in his pocket and comes up with some lint and a dead bug.

SOKKA
Sorry.

The Storyteller goes off in a huff.

STORYTELLER
(not so sotto)
Cheapskates!

Aang, Momo on his shoulder, gets up and trots after him.

AANG
(to Storyteller)
Hey, thanks for the story.

The Storyteller shakes his cap at Aang, JINGLING the coins. (Although neither Aang nor the Storyteller notice it, one of the coins falls to the ground.)

STORYTELLER
Tell it to the cap, Boy!

While Aang digs in his robe for money, Momo surreptitiously retrieves the fallen coin, and drops it in the cap.

STORYTELLER
(to Momo)
Much obliged, little bat-thing.

AANG
It means a lot to hear Airbender stories. It must have been a hundred years ago your Great Grandpa met them.

STORYTELLER
What <u>are</u> you prattlin' about, child?! Great Grandpappy saw the airwalkers last week!

He points to an ANCIENT OLD OLD MAN, who smiles (all gums) and waves. Off Aang's reaction.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. APPROACHING NORTHERN AIR TEMPLE - NEXT MORNING

Aang, Katara and Sokka ride Appa through thick clouds on their way to find the Airbenders Great Grandpappy saw. Aang sits on Appa's head restlessly playing with his fur, while Katara and Sokka ride in back. Just then the clouds get patchy and some land (or sea) scape is visible ahead.

AANG
Hey, we're almost to the Northern Air Temple. This is where they had the championships for sky bison polo!

Katara smiles encouragingly at Aang, then nudges Sokka.

KATARA
(whispering)
Do you think we'll really find Airbenders?

SOKKA
You want me to be like you, or totally honest?

Katara gives him a dirty look.

KATARA
Are you saying I'm a liar?

SOKKA
I'm saying you're an optimist. Same thing, basically.

AANG
(EXCITED WHOOP) Hey, guys! Look at this!

A Temple shrouded in mist on a high mountain top looms in front of them. Tiny specks swoop in the air around it.

KATARA
Oh Aang -- they really are Airbenders!

Katara hugs him, but Aang's smile starts to fade. As they near the Temple, Aang looks downright skeptical.

AANG
No, they're not.

They can now clearly see people in bi-plane like contraptions, whipping around on the strong winds.

SOKKA
What do you mean they're not? Those guys are <u>flying</u>!

AANG
Gliding maybe, but not flying. You can tell by the way they move, they're not Airbending. Those people have no <u>spirit</u>-

Just then they are BUZZED by a kid (TEO) in a TRICKED-OUT GLIDER. He comes within a hair's breadth of the tops of their heads. Appa BELLOWS, spooked. Momo, who has flattened himself out, gets up CHITTERING.

SOKKA
Whoa!

Before they know where to look for him, Teo is out of sight. Katara smooths her hair down.

KATARA
I don’t know, Aang. That kid seemed pretty spirited.

Teo zips by them again, and Aang jumps off Appa in hot pursuit. A Top-Gun style air trick competition is sparked. (NOTE: Teo isn’t airbending, but he is amazingly talented and graceful. He’s got flying down to an art form.)

Teo’s friends, KIDS in similar, but clunkier gliders, begin curiously flocking around Appa, making him nervous. He BUCKS violently causing Katara and Sokka to BUMP their backsides hard. The Kids LAUGH delightedly.

KATARA
Whoah! Ow!

SOKKA
(rubbing his behind)
We’d better find some solid ground before it finds us.

EXT. TEMPLE GROUNDS - CONTINUOUS

Katara and Sokka guide Appa down to the Temple Grounds with the kids. The KIDS egg Teo on.

KID #1
Go Teo!

KID #2
Show that bald kid how it’s done!

EXT. THE AIR ABOVE - SIMULTANEOUS

Teo effortlessly catches an upward draft, ascending quickly, then a series of tumbles that bring him down to eye-level with Aang, but upside down and easily keeping pace with him.

TEO
Hey there -- you’re pretty good.

AANG
(pretending he’s unfazed)
Yeah, I know.
(beat)
(MORE)

AANG(cont'd)
But I can do more than fancy gliding.

Aang shows off with an awesome airborne version of his HELICOPTER MOVE, adding twists and turns which take him sideways and upside down -- clearly these are moves to trump others. The crowd GASPS and CHEERS.

TEO
(to Aang)
Wow, I don't think I could do that... but here's a good one.

Teo takes a handful of FINE DUST from his pocket. He gets up speed and whips around in a curving pattern letting the dust slip from his hand as he goes. The trick creates a cool design in the sky. More CHEERS from the ground. Teo turns to get Aang's response.

TEO
What do you think?

AANG
(flat)
It's great.

His fans (KIDS) rush over to congratulate him. Katara, Sokka and Aang realize for the first time that Teo's legs are thin and withered-- he's HANDICAPPED. They are dumbfounded. Teo catches them staring, but he's used to this from strangers. He guides the conversation away from himself.

TEO
(to Aang)
Hey, you're a <u>real</u> Airbender...
(realizing)
You must be the Avatar -- that's amazing! I've heard stories about you.

AANG
Thanks.

He smiles politely then looks down, a little lost in thought, for a beat. There's an awkward silence -- until Sokka, who has begun studying Teo's chair, interrupts.

SOKKA
Wow, this glider-chair is incredible.

TEO
You think this is good -- wait ‘till you see the other stuff my dad designed.

Sokka and Katara follow Teo down the path that precedes the grand entry way to the enormous Temple. Teo begins his tour. Aang drifts along behind.

INT. TEMPLE NAVE (OR EQUIVALENT) - LATER

Teo leads Katara, Sokka and Aang into a vast hall. It stretches skyward, but it’s impossible to tell where it ends. Nearly every square inch of space is occupied by a COMPLEX TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM which spans from the floor to ceiling. The air ECHOES with the voices of this city’s INHABITANTS as they compete with the clicking, whining and bellowing of machinery-- It is <u>not</u> the transcendental space monks created to promote uninterrupted thought and meditation. Katara and Aang who stand there overwhelmed, mouths agape.

SOKKA
Wow!

TEO
Yeah, my dad is the mastermind behind this whole place. Everything’s powered by hot air. It even pumps hot air currents outside to give us a lift when we’re gliding.

As Teo speaks, he gestures at the elaborate pipes and duct-work including an elevator system that lifts some people up.

AANG
This place is unbelievable.

TEO
(proudly)
Yeah, it’s great, isn’t it?

AANG
No -- just unbelievable.

Aang turns and walks away. Teo is a bit taken aback. Katara tries to explain.

KATARA
Aang used to come here a long time ago. I think he’s a little shocked it’s so...
(MORE)

KATARA(cont'd)
(searching for a diplomatic word)
...different.

SOKKA
So better!

Katara sees Aang wander off to look at a faded MURAL painted on a large wall. Support beams and guide wires for machinery are anchored in this wall, resulting in LARGE HOLES surrounded by cracked plaster. One hole's positioned where the stomach of a bowing monk was, making it look as if he doubles over in pain from a fatal blast; another makes it look as if a monk is decapitated.

AANG
(distraught)
This is supposed to be the history of my people.

A beat as Katara looks at Aang sympathetically. They pass what was once a reflection pool, now part of a SEWER SYSTEM. Aang turns away in disgust, and finds a (seemingly) untouched sacred STATUE of a beatific-looking monk. He gazes up at it and smiles. Suddenly, THE STATUE BELCHES FILTH INTO THE AIR! Aang jumps away in horror.

KATARA
I'm sure some parts of the temple are still the same.

INT. TEMPLE - LESS INVADED WING - LATER

Teo, Aang, Katara and Sokka have wandered to a less invaded wing.

AANG
It's nice to see at least one part of the temple that isn't ruined.

Just then there is a STARTLING CRY:

VOICE (V.O.)
LOOK OUT!!

Everyone DIVES FOR COVER. There's a deafening explosion as a "wrecking ball" SLAMS through the cloisters' elegant ante structure, reducing it to dust. Katara, Sokka, Aang and Teo COUGH and SPUTTER. Aang FUMES. Teo's dad, the MECHANIST, a grumpy, distracted man rushes over to them. (NOTE: He has eyebrows with patchy bald spots, and a reddish ring around his left eye.) He is followed by a nerdy young PAGE toting a scroll and brush.

MECHANIST
What the doodle?! Don’t you know enough to stay away from construction sites?! We have to make room for the bath house.

AANG
(enraged)
Do you know what you did?! You just destroyed something sacred! For a stupid bath house?!

MECHANIST
Well, people around here are starting to stink...

Aang can barely hold back his anger -- then he explodes.

AANG
This whole place stinks!

He sends a terrific blast of air that tosses the wrecking device backwards as if it were a toy. It topples, shattering the boulder with a second huge EXPLOSION.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. TEMPLE - MONKS' CLOISTERS - CONTINUED

Everyone (Katara, Sokka, Aang, Teo, Mechanist, Page and Crew) recovers from the second blast. Aang shakes with emotion. He cannot believe these people!

AANG
(to Mechanist)
This is a sacred temple -- you can't treat it this way! I've seen it when the monks were here, I know what it's supposed to be like!

MECHANIST
The monks?
(studying Aang)
But you're twelve...

TEO
Dad, he's the Avatar. He used to come here a hundred years ago.

AANG
What are you doing? Who said you could be here?

MECHANIST
(distracted)
Hmm... doing here...

He begins to pace.

MECHANIST
A long time ago -- but not a hundred years -- my people became refugees after a terrible flood. My infant son, Teo, was badly hurt and lost his mother.

Teo lowers his head.

MECHANIST (CONT'D)
I needed somewhere to rebuild... and I stumbled across this place. Couldn't believe it! Everywhere! Pictures of flying people. But empty, nobody home... then I came across these fan-like contraptions--

He mimes gliders.

AANG
Our gliders.

MECHANIST (CONT'D)
Yes, little, light flying machines! They gave me an idea: Build a new life for my son -- in the air! Then everyone would be on "equal ground." So to speak.

The Mechanist snorts a bump of cocaine from his palm. Katara, and even Sokka, look touched by the story. Aang looks down. It's impossible to tell what he's thinking.

MECHANIST (CONT'D)
We're just in the process of improving upon what's already here. And after all, isn't that what nature does?

AANG
(quietly)
Nature knows where to stop.

MECHANIST
(wistfully)
I suppose that's true. Unfortunately, progress has a way of getting away from us.

The Mechanist looks at a LARGE NOTCHED CANDLE that has burned down to a MARKING labeled to indicate passing time. (The Chinese actually used candles to tell time 6,000 years ago.)

MECHANIST
Look at the time!
(to Page)
Come. The pulley system must be oiled before dark.

SOKKA
Wait, how can you tell the time from that thing? The notches all look the same.

MECHANIST
The candle will tell us... watch.

They watch the flame for a second. When it reaches the notch, there are FOUR SEQUENTIAL SPARKLER FLASHES from the candle.

SOKKA
You put spark powder in the candle!

MECHANIST
Four flashes, so it’s exactly four hours past midday. Or as I call it, “Four O’candle.”

SOKKA
(LAUGHS)

MECHANIST
If you like that, wait till you see my finger-safe knife-sharpener. Only took me three tries to get it right!

The Mechanist holds up his hand and removes three prosthetic wooden fingers, revealing he’s lost fingers. The Mechanist impatiently beckons Sokka, and they go.

MECHANIST
Follow me.

TEO
Hey Aang, I want to show you something.

INT. TEMPLE HALLWAY - LATER

Teo leads the Aang and Katara down a dark hallway lit with torches. A few hermit crabs scamper about. The walls are marred with industrial piping sticking out. Aang looks around dismayed.

AANG
I just can’t get over it. There’s not a single thing that’s the same.

TEO
I don’t know about that.

TEO
The temple might be different, but the creatures that live here--

Teo scoops up a small, HERMIT CRAB, handing it to Katara.

TEO (CONT’D)
-- are probably direct descendants of the ones that lived here a long time ago.

KATARA
You’re right. They’re kind of keepers of the temple’s origins.

Katara passes the crab to Aang, who holds it and smiles.

TEO
Besides there is one part of the temple that hasn’t changed at all.

They come to a huge, exquisitely carved door which guards the temple’s sanctum. (Like the door in episode 103, it requires Airbending to open.)

KATARA
Hey, it’s just like the one in the other Air Temple!

120 Teo holds his hand out to the door. 120

TEO
Only an Airbender can open it, so inside it’s completely untouched. Just the way the monks left it.
(beat)
I’ve always wondered what it was like in there.

There’s an AWKWARD PAUSE as Teo and Katara wait to see if Aang will act.

KATARA
Aang?

AANG
(defensive)
I’m sorry! This is the last part of the Temple that’s the same as it was. I want it to stay that way.

Teo hides his disappointment graciously.

TEO
I completely understand.
(beat)
I just wanted you to know it was here.

AANG
Thanks.

They go back down the hallway in silence.

INT. PATHWAY TO TEMPLE CELLAR - DAY

The Mechanic and Sokka take a dirt path into the temple's depths carrying PAPER LANTERNS with an eerie, green light.

SOKKA
These lanterns are terrible. I can't see!

Sokka opens the top of his lantern.

SOKKA
Why would you want to use fireflies for light?

MECHANIST
Hey! Close that up. They'll get loose.
(primly)
Fire flies are a non-flammable light source.

They reach a small door: The end of the tunnel. The Mechanist carefully unwraps some cloths stuffed around the edges of the door. He hands Sokka a handkerchief.

MECHANIST
Cover your nose, hold your breath.

He opens the door, lets them in, then quickly closes it behind them. Now they're in a closet-sized room. The Mechanist opens a small look-through in the door, pokes his lantern in for a split-second, and slams it closed again.

SOKKA
Oh okay. So you brought me all the way down here to see an empty room.

MECHANIST
Wrong. It's filled to the brim: with natural gas! Came across it my first time here. Unfortunately, I was carrying a torch at the time. Nearly blew myself and the whole place even more sky-high.

The Mechanist pats his forehead.

MECHANIST (CONT'D)
Thought my eyebrows would never grow back!

Sokka looks quizzically at the Mechanist's (one remaining brow?/patchy bald-spotted eyebrows?

MECHANIST (CONT'D)
Anyway, there's a vital problem that needs solving: From time to time... we have gas leaks. And they're nearly impossible to find.

They stuff the cloths back around the edges of the door.

SOKKA
So this place is an explosion waiting to happen.

MECHANIST
Yes, until I figure out how to locate something I can't see, hear, smell or touch.

Sokka ponders the problem.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TEMPLE OVERLOOK - DAY

Teo is giving a lecture on air.

TEO
The wind will carry you. It supports something inside you, something even lighter than air.

Reveal that he is talking to Katara who has a glider strapped to her back. Teo adjusts the last strap. Aang is there too, listening intently.

TEO (CONT'D)
And that 'something' takes over when you fly.

Katara, pale and TREMBLING WITH FEAR, looks over the edge.

KATARA
I've changed my mind. I think I was born without that 'something.'

TEO
Impossible. Everybody has it.

Teo's words are not lost on Aang, sitting a few feet away.

AANG
Spirit.

TEO
What?

AANG
That’s the ‘something’ you’re talking about.

TEO
Yeah -- I suppose it is.

Teo and Katara are in their gliders.

TEO
Are you ready?

KATARA
No.

Katara takes a big breath and JUMPS off the edge of the roof. Teo follows.

KATARA
(SCREAMS)

In a panic, Aang runs to the edge, but looking down he realizes she is now SHRIEKING WITH LAUGHTER as she flies. She’s a little wobbly, but holding her own.

Teo notices Aang watching them. He swoops up next to him landing in his chair like a hawk on a branch, hovering just a second above it, before retracting his wings and dropping.

It’s an obvious lie, but Aang jumps off and finds Katara. They fly silently a moment.

KATARA
I can’t believe I’m flying!

AANG
Just make sure you keep your mouth closed so you don’t swallow a bug.

Momo (flying next to Aang) purposefully keeps his mouth open to catch bugs as he flies.

KATARA
Teo was right about the air -- all I had to do was trust it -- let it carry me.

They glide above the lotus shaped garden.

AANG
Even though Teo's not an Airbender... he really does have the spirit of one.

Katara smiles. Aang lands next to Teo.

AANG
I've been thinking... if you want to see what's in that room, I'd be happy to open the door for you.

TEO
(excited)
Great!

KATARA (O.S.)
Wait, how do I land this thing?!

They see Katara still circling above.

KATARA
What if I land over-- (GAGGING AND COUGHING) bug, bug! That was a bug.

INT. TEMPLE - MECHANIST'S WORKSHOP - SIMULTANEOUS

Sokka is looking at SCROLLS on the Mechanist's shelf, while the Mechanist scribbles on some paper.

Sokka inadvertently KNOCKS OVER a project involving an EGG causing a loud CLATTER. (NOTE: The egg is in a tiny basket attached to a sort of paper balloon.) The egg rolls out of sight.

MECHANIST
I said don't touch anything! Agh,

Sokka SCRAMBLES to pick up the pieces of the experiment as the Mechanist rushes over.

MECHANIST (CONT'D)
Don't worry. That experiment's old. And that egg was just part of last week's lunch.

Just then, both their noses begin twitching.

SOKKA
Ugh! Week old egg smell!

MECHANIST
Quick, find that egg!

They begin searching the floor.

INT. TEMPLE OUTSIDE DOOR TO SANCTUM - SIMULTANEOUS

Teo, Katara and Aang stand silently before the door.

TEO
I can’t believe I’m finally going to see what’s inside.

Aang raises his arms, sending multiple BLASTS OF AIR shooting through the door’s carvings.

INT. TEMPLE - MECHANIST’S WORKSHOP - SIMULTANEOUS

The Mechanist and Sokka are still searching for the egg.

SOKKA
How can something that’s so small you can’t even see, make such a big stink?

Simultaneously, they poke their heads up, facing each other.

MECHANIST
That’s the solution to our problem!

SOKKA
Yeah! If we put a whole mess of rotten eggs in the cellar where the gas seeps up--

MECHANIST
The gas will mix with the smell of rotten eggs--

SOKKA
Then if there’s a leak--

MECHANIST
You smell rotten eggs! Then you just follow your nose to the place where the smell is coming from--

SOKKA
And plug up the hole where the gas is escaping!

MECHANIST SOKKA
You’re a genius! You’re a genius!

An alarm bell RINGS! The Mechanist PALES.

MECHANIST
Something’s wrong... I’ve got to go!

He runs out.

INT. TEMPLE - INSIDE SANCTUM SANCTORUM - SECONDS LATER

Katara, Teo and Aang stand, mouths agape, as the doors open. But as they see what’s inside, their expressions turn from awe to silent disbelief. Inside we reveal numerous swords, arrows, armor, and terrifying unfamiliar weapons -- emblazoned with the **FIRE NATION INSIGNIA**! The sanctum has been turned into a SECRET WEAPON-MAKING LAB!

AANG
This is a nightmare--

The Mechanist appears behind them... Sokka follows behind.

MECHANIST
You don’t understand.

Aang whirls around.

AANG
You’re making weapons for the Fire Nation!

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. TEMPLE - INSIDE THE SANCTUM - CONTINUOUS

The gravity of the situation sinks in.

SOKKA
You make weapons for the Fire Nation?!

Stunned, and offended by the implication, Aang takes this in.

TEO
(to his father, furious)
Explain all this. Now.

The Mechanist begins tearing at his hair.

MECHANIST
It was about a year after we moved here -- Fire Nation soldiers found our settlement.

Aang reacts silently to this.

MECHANIST (CONT'D)
You were too young to remember this, Teo. They were going to destroy everything, burn it to the ground. I pleaded with them, I begged them to spare us. They asked what I had to offer...

The Mechanist turns to the wall and bangs his head against it. Sokka shakes his head sadly.

MECHANIST (CONT'D)
(pained)
I offered my services.

No one knows what to say. The Mechanist turns to his son, pleading for sympathy.

MECHANIST
You must understand: I did this for you!

Teo looks horrified, then turns away from his father. The Mechanist hangs his head and walks away silently.

INT. TEMPLE - INSIDE THE MECHANIST'S WORKSHOP - DAY

The Mechanist has revived the balloon experiment Sokka stumbled across before -- ESSENTIALLY IT'S A FLYING WARSHIP VERSION OF A HOT-AIR BALLOON. He places a small candle in the 'ship.' The paper balloon fills with hot air and rises.

Aang and Teo enter, as the balloon drifts around the room.

AANG
(to Mechanist)
When are they coming?

MECHANIST
Soon.

He looks to a nearby "clock candle", like we saw before.

MECHANIST
Very soon.

AANG
You can't give them more weapons.

MECHANIST
(defeated)
If I don't give them what they want, they will destroy this place.

The balloon catches fire and goes up in a PUFF OF SMOKE.

TEO
How can I be proud of you when your inventions are being used for murder?!

The Mechanist is silenced.

MECHANIST
I need some time to think.

Just then, they hear a KNOCKING sound.

MECHANIST
You need to leave. Go!

The KNOCKING gets louder.

TEO
We're not leaving.

The KNOCKING becomes POUNDING.

MECHANIST
Then hide -- quickly!

Aang and Teo duck out of sight. Just as they do, the Mechanist steps on a hidden pedal, causing a trap door in the floor to spring open, revealing a secret passageway and steps heading into the darkness below. A FIRE NATION EMISSARY emerges.

EMISSARY
You know better than to keep me waiting. Give me what you owe us so I can be on my way.

The kids peer out to see what the Mechanist will do. He wavers.

EMISSARY
Well?
(threatening)
Is there a problem?

MECHANIST
(submissive)
No. Right this way.

The Mechanist and Emissary go to the door. Aang appears and blocks it.

AANG
(to Emissary, tough)
Deal’s off.

EMISSARY
(realizing)
The Avatar.

MECHANIST
Aang, don’t get involved.

EMISSARY
(to Mechanist)
If I don’t get what I came for, the Fire Nation will burn this place to rubble.

AANG
Get out of here. You’re leaving empty-handed.

EMISSARY
(to Aang)
Then the destruction of this temple will be on your head!

He exits.

EXT. TEMPLE GROUNDS - DAY

Sokka and Katara have rejoined Aang and Teo. A few people glide around in the skies.

SOKKA
This is bad, very bad.

Katara and Teo look worried.

KATARA
Aang, what are we going to do? How can we possibly keep them all away?

AANG
I'll tell you how... we have something they don't:

He motions to the people gliding around.

AANG
Air power.
(beat)
We control the sky. That's something the Fire Nation can't do that. We can win!

MECHANIST
I want to help.

Everyone turns to see the Mechanist. There's an awkward beat -- then Aang breaks the silence.

AANG
Good. We'll need it.

He indicates the red burn ring around his eye.

INT. TEMPLE - MECHANIST'S WORKSHOP - NEXT DAY

Sokka and the Mechanist present a newly constructed WARBALLOON PROTOTYPE to Katara, Aang, Teo and a few others.

MECHANIST
We finally got the Warballoon working, thanks to Sokka. This boy's a genius!

SOKKA
Thank you. You're a genius.

MECHANIST
Thank you.

Sokka then addresses the crowd as if they are interested and fascinated. He demonstrates with the prototype.

SOKKA
(dramatic, very bossy)
See, the problem with the old Warballoon was you could get it airborne, but once you did -- it just kept going.

He demonstrates that the balloon keeps rising until it hits the ceiling. He pulls it back down with an attached tether.

SOKKA
You could put a hole in the top -- but then all the hot air would escape. So the question became: how do you keep a lid on hot air?

KATARA
(re: Sokka's bossiness)
Ugh, if only we knew!

AANG/TEO
(LAUGHING)

Sokka opens and closes a tiny VALVE on the top of the Warballoon.

SOKKA
(oblivious)
A lid is actually the answer! If you can control the hot air, you can control the Warballoon!

Suddenly everyone is paying attention.

KATARA
Hmm. That's actually pretty smart.

SOKKA
Okay, we've got four kinds of bombs: smoke, slime, fire and--

MECHANIST
Stink! Never underestimate the power of stink.

EXT. TEMPLE OVERLOOK - DAY

Our gang, minus Sokka and the Mechanist, gliders readied survey their scrappy army: Teo's Friends, and City People, are stationed on the mountain in their gliders, armed. The Fire Nation is a tiny chain of ants crawling uphill below.

Momo sits perched on Aang's shoulder while Aang perches on Appa.

GIRL
They're coming!

TEO
Are we ready?

KATARA
(nervous)
Yes, but where's Sokka with the Warballoon?

AANG
We'll have to start without it.

Aang leads the glider people toward the troops in the distance.

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE PATH - CONTINUOUS

As the troops march up the mountain, Aang and the glider people swoop overhead, dropping smoke and slime bombs (Note: each glider can carry only a few grenade-sized bombs per run) down on the soldiers. Several of them slip on the slime and slide back down the path. Other soldiers retreat from the smoke, coughing.

AANG
We've got them on the run -- we need more slime!

Aang and the others circle back to the temple to reload.

EXT. TEMPLE - CONTINUOUS

Back near the temple, Appa hovers in the air. The gliders fly past Appa's saddle as Katara hands each passing glider an armful of new bombs. Momo helps too. (Essentially, Appa is acting as a reloading station.)

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE PATH - CONTINUOUS

The gliders return to the fight, but there is a new threat to this wave of the Fire Nation's attack: STURDY FIRE-SHOOTING TANKS. The tanks are slow, but sure-footed, steadily moving without loss of traction over slime and through the smoke that deterred the foot soldiers.

Aang lands in front of a tank, and sends a huge Airbending blast at it, toppling it over. However, we see that the the treads work even upside down, and the cockpit automatically rights itself. The tanks resumes its steady ascent.

Teo flies back to Katara and Appa.

KATARA
(re: tanks)
Those things are unstoppable!

TEO
I think I know how they work. I remember my dad tinkering with a counterbalancing system. Something to do with water.
(ironic)
Works great, huh?

KATARA
(excited)
Water?!
(re: closest tank)
Can you get me close to one?

TEO
No problem!

Katara grabs on to Teo's glider and they swoop down toward the tanks.

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE PATH - CONTINUOUS

Teo drops Katara off near Aang, then circles back. As the tank heads straight for them, Katara takes a stance then does a Waterbending move: causing the tank to spring a large gushing leak.

Then Aang sends an air blast at the tank, toppling it over -- and this time, it stays toppled, and the gushing water forms a puddle around it.

Another tank comes, but before Katara can do her Waterbending move, the tank fires a Firebending blast just missing them. Several more tanks appear, firing shots. There are just too many of them. Aang grabs Katara and they fly back towards the temple.

EXT. AIR TEMPLE - MOMENTS LATER

As Aang and Katara return to the Appa “reloading station”, they see that Appa has landed as well as many of the gliders. Momo is frantic.

TEO
We’re out of bombs.

They see that the tanks are cresting over the ridge and heading toward the temple.

KATARA
Come on Sokka, where’s that warballoon?

Just then they hear YELLING. They turn to see Glider forces pointing at the sky: A MASSIVE FIRE NATION INSIGNIA rises on the horizon!

INT. WARBALLON - CONTINUOUS

Sokka and the Mechanist guide the Warballoon (bearing the Fire Nation insignia) towards the Temple. They OPEN AND CLOSE THE VALVE to guide the balloon. Sokka surveys the ground.

SOKKA
Hey, why aren’t they shooting at us?

MECHANIST
The insignia -- they think we’re on their side.

SOKKA
Then I guess they won’t see this coming...

Sokka uses his knife to cut one of the ropes that hold a large bomb on the side of the craft. As it falls...

MECHANIST
(with glee)
Bombs awaaaay!

The unsuspecting Fire Nation tanks and soldiers below are completely covered in STICKY GUNK from the bomb!

EXT. AIR TEMPLE - CONTINUOUS

The warballoon flies over the oncoming Fire Nation troops. Sokka and the Mechanist continue to cut ropes and drop bombs on the enemy. A mixture of smoke, slime and sticky bombs continue to rain on the Fire Nation troops. Sokka realizes they've released all the bombs.

SOKKA
Oh no, that was the last one.

They look down to see that the tanks are getting closer to the temple, threatening Teo and the gliders.

MECHANIST
Wait a second... you smell that?

SOKKA
Rotten eggs.

Sokka looks down toward the mountain where he notices a fissure in the rocks.

SOKKA
There. That's where the gas is escaping.

Sokka grabs the balloon's heating mechanism and rips it out.

MECHANIST
What are you doing? That's our fuel source!

SOKKA
It's the only bomb we've got.

Sokka chucks the flaming fuel container into the fissure. Nothing happens for a beat. Then there is a HUGE EXPLOSION. When the dust settles, the tanks are gone and we see that part of the mountain has collapsed in a landslide. The remaining troops retreat back down the mountain.

AANG
Look! They're retreating!

Just then there's a CRY.

SOKKA (O.S.)
We're going down!

KATARA
No! Sokka! Hold on!

The Warballoon, rapidly losing altitude, is headed for the forest. Aang makes a split-second decision and flies after the balloon on the glider.

Aang speeds toward the sinking balloon. Sokka has looped some rope around his boomerang, as Aang passes, Sokka throws the boomerang which loops around the glider. (Similar to the action in the pilot.)

SOKKA
Get ready.

As the rope tightens, Aang pulls Sokka and the Mechanist free of the balloon, just as it crashes into the trees. They fly off.

EXT. TEMPLE GARDENS - LATER

Everyone has gathered and is in a good mood from their victory.

AANG
You know what, I'm really glad you guys all live here now. I realized...

He picks up a hermit crab that is scrambling past.

AANG
It's like the hermit crab -- maybe you weren't born here, but you found this empty shell and made it your home. And now you protect <u>each</u> <u>other</u>.

TEO
That means a lot coming from you.

SOKKA
Aang, you were right about air power . As long as we've got the skies, we'll have the Fire Nation on the run!

EVERYONE
(CHEERS)

Amidst the happy faces, only the Mechanist looks away SADLY -- Something on his mind.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST NEAR TEMPLE - SIMULTANEOUS

The Emissary and some other FIRE NATION OFFICIALS oversee a CREW OF SOLDIERS untangling the Warballoon's ropes from the trees. The Emissary smiles as he watches a SOLDIER FIREBENDING air under the balloon. The balloon fills up, to the Soldier's delight.

EMISSARY
(smiling, satisfied)
This defeat is the gateway to many victories.

END OF SHOW